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premises, said gateway being connected to the subscriber premises via a data network;

sending a query to the call center;

preparing a call set up instruction for setting up the call between the subscriber premises and the call center if an availability reply is received from the call center; and

estimating a time-in-queue for the call center to be available to receive the call and preparing a call queue status message for delivery to the gateway if an unavailability reply is received before the availability reply is received from the call center.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising sending the call queue status message to the gateway for delivery to the subscriber premises.

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8. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving an agent available reply from the call center; and
preparing an updated call queue status message for delivery to the gateway.

9. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising preparing an updated call queue status message for delivery to the gateway after receiving the availability reply.

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13. (Amended) An apparatus for setting up a call between a subscriber premises and a call center, comprising:

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means for receiving a call set up request from a gateway responsive to the subscriber premises said gateway being connected to the subscriber premises via a data network;

means for sending a query to the call center;

means for receiving a reply from the call center;

means for preparing a call set up instruction for setting up the call between the subscriber premises and the call center if an availability reply is received from the call center; and

means for estimating a time-in-queue for the call center to be available to receive the call and means for preparing a call queue status message for delivery to the gateway if an unavailability reply is received before the availability reply is received from the call center.

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18. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising means for sending the call queue status message to the gateway for delivery to the subscriber premises.

19. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising:

means for receiving an agent available reply from the call center, and

means for preparing an updated call queue status message for delivery to the gateway.

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20. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising means for preparing an updated call queue status message for delivery to the gateway after receiving the availability reply.

Please add new claims 24-27 as follows:

24. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the data network is the Internet.
25. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
utilizing a telephone at the subscriber premises for enabling communication between a user at the subscriber premises and an available agent at the call center.
26. (New) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the data network is the Internet.
27. (New) The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising:
a telephone at the subscriber premises for enabling communication between a user at the subscriber premises and an available agent at the call center.

Kindly cancel claims 6 and 17 without prejudice or disclaimer.